Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A method for encoding of a digital video image signal in an encoder apparatus having a coding stage and an encoder buffer, the method comprising the steps of: successively encoding image fields of the signal in compliance with a predetermined coding scheme; reading the encoded field data into the buffer; and subsequently reading the stored data out of the buffer at a bit rate determined at least partially by the fullness of the buffer; wherein each image field is encoded as a series of slices each comprised of a predetermined number of successive lines of the field, with a predetermined number of data bits allocated for the encoding of a slice, and the encoded data for the slice is read into the encoder buffer and subsequently read out therefrom on completion of encoding of the slice.

2. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, in which the slices of a field are encoded such that the encoded field complies with one or more MPEG standards.

3. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 2, in which the slices of a field are intra-coded without reference to any other field.

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4. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the coding stage is operable to encode a slice at a number of quantisation levels, and the quantisation level used is chosen in dependence on the said predetermined number of bits allocated.

5. (Original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein each slice comprises sixteen luminance lines.

6. (Original) A digital video image signal encoder apparatus comprising: an encoding stage arranged to receive successive image fields of the signal and encode them according to a predetermined coding scheme; and a buffer coupled to receive encoded field data from the encoding stage and arranged to subsequently output the stored data at a bit rate determined at least partially by the fullness of the buffer; wherein the encoding stage is further arranged to encode each image field as a series of slices each comprised of a predetermined number of successive lines of the field and within a predetermined number of data bits allocated for the encoding of a slice, and the buffer is arranged such that the encoded data for the slice is read in thereto and subsequently read out therefrom on completion of encoding of the slice.

7. (Original) Apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the encoding stage is arranged to encode the slices of a field such that the encoded field complies with one or more MPEG standards.

8. (Original) Apparatus as claimed in claim 7, wherein the encoding stage is arranged to intra-code the slices of a field without reference to any other field.

9. (Original) Apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the encoding stage is operable to encode a slice at a number of quantisation levels, and the quantisation level used is determined within the stage in dependence on the said predetermined number of bits allocated.

10. (Original) A digital video image processing means comprising an apparatus as claimed in claim 6, further comprising a source of encoded digital video images coupled with a decoder for said encoded images, said decoder having an output coupled as input for said encoding stage.

11. (Original) Processing apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said source of encoded digital video images comprises connection means for coupling to a remote source of

said images.

12. (Original) Processing apparatus as claimed in claim 10, wherein said source of encoded digital video images comprises means for receiving and reading encoded digital video image data from a removable storage device.

13. (Original) Processing apparatus as claimed in claim 12, wherein the means for receiving and reading encoded digital video image data from a removable storage device comprises an optical disc reader.

14. (Original) An optical disc carrying a plurality of video image fields encoded by the method of claim 1.